



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2008 Volume II: Storytelling: Fictional Narratives, Imaginary People, and the Reader's Real Life

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## **Animal Farm: Critical Approaches -- Unpeeling the Layers**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.02.03  
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This unit is designed for an urban, middle-school class using *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, as its main text. The purpose of this unit is to bridge the gap between my students' cursory examination of a text and a more highly developed assessment, where they dig deeper and demand more of what they experience. It is my goal to get them to a place where they can consider a piece of literature on several levels, being able to "unpeel" the structure and expose the complexities and sophisticated nuances of the text. In other words, they will learn to see and appreciate literature as a multi-layered construct of meaning. I will use an interdisciplinary, differentiated modality of instruction to accomplish my goals.

In order to present this idea effectively, I begin with the familiar, a visual scene that they can "read" without words and then use incremental steps through metaphoric poems and short stories, finally arriving at the novel itself. Along the way, students are offered essential questions to get them to understand that stories are more than just plot. These questions lead to the introductions to the historical, biographical, feminist, and formalistic approaches to literature.

(Developed for Language Arts, grades 7-8; recommended for Middle School Language Arts, grades 7-8, and High School English, grades 9-10)

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